



Miami-Dade County
Commission on Disability Issues (CODI)
Stephen P. Clark Center (SPCC)
111 N.W. 1st Street, Miami, Florida 33128
18th Floor, Conference Room 18-4

Date:	Tuesday, February 27, 2024	
Time:	10:30am – 1pm	
Call to Order Time:	10:55 am	
Meeting Adjourned:	1:04 pm	
Opening and Attendance: Attendance recorded. Call to Order. Copies of documents were distributed.		
District 1 Commissioner Oliver G. Gilbert, III	Damian Gregory Chairman	P
District 2 Commissioner Marliene Bastien	Jackson David	A
District 3 Commissioner Keon Hardemon	Marilyn Orozco	P
District 4 Commissioner Micky Steinberg	Melissa Knowles	P
District 5 Commissioner Eileen Higgins	Eddie Sierra Vice Chairman	P
District 6 Commissioner Kevin M. Cabrera	Stephanie Aponte	A
District 7 Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado	Rabbi Yossi Harlig	P
District 8 Commissioner Danielle Cohen Higgins	Nicole Attong	P
District 9 Commissioner Kionne L. McGhee	Ulrica Garcia	A
District 10 Commissioner Anthony Rodriguez	Natalia Wong	P
District 11 Commissioner Roberto J. Gonzalez	Katherine Magnoli Secretary	P
District 12 Commissioner Juan Carlos Bermudez	Maria “Mercedes” Villar	P
District 13 Commissioner René Garcia	Pending Appointment	

Miami-Dade County Staff Present	Heidi A. Johnson, ISD, ADA Coordinator Jody Cox, ISD, ADA Projects Administrator	
Member(s) of the Public:	Ruben Legra (paratransit Chief), Odilanda Brito (PHCD ADA Coordinator for housing development), Yohanka	
• Damian introduced himself, started meeting, and had Jody do roll call for quorum. November 28th Minutes were approved. Approve the agenda too. • Rabbi cannot attend April 23rd CODI meeting due to Jewish holiday. Damian says meeting may be cancelled due to Passover. • Next topic is Subminimum wage. Heidi: In Florida it is permissible for circumstances to pay people with disabilities minimum wage. Some things have passed making that illegal. If you were so inclined, you could always have the BCC request the state legislature pass. • Natalia Wong: The federal government canceled use of 14-C certificates (with transition period) and Goodwill has given up all of their 14-C and are not doing any sheltered workshops. The individuals who are significantly impaired, they have now integrated them within all of their different types of work settings. It is relevant to have 14-C in the letter. There are organizations nationally that do not want to phase out 14-C and are lobbying at the federal level to keep it. • Nicole: There are retired professionals who meet with different legislatures and sway a legislature on their point of view. As a state employee, I can educate, but a lobbyist will do things like donating to campaigns and etc. • Chairman Gregory: 14-C was intended to give people with disabilities an opportunity to participate in the workforce. So, the reason for this letter is to encourage our BCC to urge their counterparts in the Florida Legislature to get rid of subminimum wage in Florida. I'd like us to vote on to put before the BCC and revise the letter before as needed. We have 90% of the letter ready and before the end of the day we can have the letter approved. There is another mechanism for PWD called day training. With day training, the individual gets engaged in a meaningful way through different things. What is usually not attached to the training program is a work component because it is very difficult to match capacity to work production with this group of individuals. The field is now beginning to explore meaningful work for PWD to add to their training program. CODI discussed how to edit the letter, then moved to next topic. • Ruben Legra, pair transit Chief, pair transit. Asked to bring a quarterly report or update on what is going on with STS. We did begin our writers meeting. I'll have staff and CODI to schedule the meetings and email it to you. So, this is October, November, December for STS. We had performance of 86.80%. Our weekday ridership increased to 5700 trips a day. Our weekend ridership went up to 2250 trips. And our population right now is 45,031. The goal is 87%. Sometimes better, sometimes less. It depends on the day of the week. Also during December, November, during the holidays, there's a lot of movement. Miami-Dade County communications department is ready to do a soft launch. We have to get the bar codes and QR codes printed out and all of this done, but we need someone from CODI to help us through this process.		

- Chairman Gregory: What platform do you plan to use to administer the survey? Is it something that will be done online or through a task -- how do you envision reaching your audience or is it something going to be done on paper that people do in a vehicle? What do you envision?
- The communications department will create a QR code and locate a place and distribution will be determined by county. Management develops final plan -- survey going forward. Projection should be six months and then they have questions here. We want CODI's participation and their thoughts. This is only talking about a soft launch.
- Mercy and me, we endured, both of us together, we can go ahead and take that. What is small sample size you are going to use? And are you considering this question over various types of people, different types of disabilities or just going to be whoever shows up on a particular date or time that you are doing it?
- The idea was the QR code would be originally requested so that if someone is having untimely ride or want to make a comment, they can do that. We want to launch it with a group of 50.
- Natalia Wong: This is part of the vehicle?
- Part of the vehicle. So we can see how it works, if it doesn't work, who is going to complain I can't find the QR code. You can also do it online. But it's in the car you are going to –
- Natalia Wong: You have to consider for the blind how you will notify them of this because they are not going to see a QR code and they won't know how to go online to do it.
- Nicole Attong: When someone makes a ride and books an appointment there is a way in which you notify them of this so you are not singling out one group of people, one sect or subset of the population that have a particular type of disability. You can push info via text and they can use screen reading or assistive technology they have to open the link and complete it. You can also go to The Lighthouse for the Blind and ask them if they will assist you in reaching their population. We can put it in recordings, online. We can put it everywhere and in a specific location in the vehicle.
- Eddie Sierra: Nicole, you mentioned that ridership is up to almost 45,000, is that correct?
- No. Not the ridership, the clients. We have 5,780 riders.
- Eddie Sierra: You mentioned on the weekends there was another 2,000 something.
- We have 50 vehicles and 100 complaints; have those been broken down into subdivisions or subcategories of different disabilities? Can we get more?
- Ruben Legra: Eddie, it's a soft launch. Whether the technology works, any buzz to come out of that? I can't do a 405-vehicle launch at one time because I'm going to get a lot of repeated complaints. I'll start with a small group and then reach out to The Lighthouse for the Blind and disability community to use it. Not only complaints. It could be my ride was good today. There's a lot of different questions. This is a survey that someone can do and grab from the car and say, hey, this car was dirty.
- Mary Katherine Magnoli: I have experienced some good things since the changes have happened, but there's been some issues that I have experienced postally with communication between the driver, like when they are going to be arriving. I'll call the day before to confirm and sometimes the arrival will be 30 minutes early or an hour late.
- That could be a couple of things. It might be that your ride was moved because we have vehicles that are not rescheduled, meaning they are sitting around or something goes wrong with a route and they get a standby vehicle to get you and that could be the change in time.

- Nicole Attong: I like your soft launch. I'd like to make another suggestion. To the point of trying to get a broad view of different people with different types of disabilities. Is there a way you are selecting the 50 vehicles. Spreading them across the county or randomly selecting them?
- We are not there yet and there will be a methodology to do that. We are trying to do the bar codes because we found out it is not that expensive and easy to do. But with new software, we will have an application that will make it way easier for you to hit a button and have your questionnaire and you can do everything right there. If the software goes out it will be a year or year and a half.
- Nicole Attong: There are groups that will not be able to scan that bar code in the car and could be somebody with a physical impairment. I'd encourage different ways in which people can get to that link, even though it is a soft launch.
- We are asking for CODI's participation. Those are suggestions we want to hear so we can tweak it so we can get as many participants as possible. 50% of our population have a cognitive issue where we know they probably will not participate but their parents or guardians will.
- Chairman Gregory: Give us an idea generally of what the timeline is for the soft launch. Give us a general road map of where -- of when you think the soft launch will happen.
- Hopefully in the next 60 days.
- Chairman Gregory: We look forward to seeing you in April to give some feedback as to how it is going or when it is launching.
- Kat: I don't want to violate any Sunshine law, you need to figure out if they are accepting emails. I can have one on ones but I know that too many one on ones is a problem. So, please.
- Chairman Gregory: I think, if I'm not mistaken, Heidi, they can email Rubin directly, individually.
- Can we just CC CODI?
- Direct emails to Ruben but not to each other because where two or more are gathered that's when we have a problem. No copying, like you can't copy her. I can send it to Jody and she can send it to you. The office to Skarlex Ruben.
- Chairman Gregory: We are going to move down the agenda to housing.
- I'm Odilanda Brito and I'm the PHCD ADA Coordinator for housing development.
- Chairman Gregory: If you could do a broad stroke 30,000-foot view of what the report says?
- A draft has been sent to the Mayor's office. It's going to be in the May agenda. We have 1600 - 1700 units that are accessible in our public housing redevelopment portfolio. If there are any residents that require applications for a unit that is accessible, that is unoccupied, we will move a resident that is on a waiting list to that unit. There are additional units that have been completed for retrofit. There are 4,000 - 5,000 people on the waiting list.
- Nicole Attong: What's the total number of places in your portfolio? What's the population?
- Total 6,000 units, including the 1,600.
- Without the 1,600, we don't have 60% of the housing units that are accessible currently. All of these 6,000 units are fully used, right? Yes.
- Nicole Attong: What if someone needs an accessible unit?
- For example, you are in a unit and you need accessibility. If there is something that you need done, we do it. We don't have to move you from the unit.
- Nicole Attong: So they can continue to live there. Let's say there's a hallway and there's no way to make it wide enough. Is it possible to change the unit?

- Based on relocation standards we would do it as soon as possible to make that reasonable accommodation. If we can't modify it we would move them to an accessible unit.
- Nicole Attong: That means 30% of the existing units are accessible. Do you have the county plan in place that rolls out a tiered plan of how the county is going to make more units accessible?
- That is the way reasonable accommodations and modifications work. I'll get back to you if there is a tiered plan. I don't know about it. But if there is one I'll get back to you.
- Eddie Sierra: I know three people that have been in a unit and they have been waiting a long time for an accessible room and closet. So what they have been told at that building where they live in is they don't have funding and the county does not provide for them.
- What facility is that? Our policy is to make modifications.
- Natalia: The difference is accessibility is a different standard, which means that it is accessible to all and then you are reducing the need for accommodation. Housing is made accessible so that there's a minimum need for accommodations.
- So, Nicole, are you saying that when housing units are designed, all have inclusive design principles so that it isn't all the regular people over here and the 5% minimum over there?
- Tell us what the long-term plan is to make these houses or apartments accessible to all.
- After 1991, all buildings over four units has to have a certain width. Doors have to be made with certain accessibility features. We don't put 5% of units in to one particular area.
- Nicole Attong: We're talking about making the living accommodation accessible to all, whether it is somebody in a wheelchair or not. Is there a County plan to undertake a bigger revamp or updating of the housing units to make them accessible regardless of whether a person living there has a disability or not?
- Chairman Gregory: You are using universal design.
- Katherine Magnoli: The CODI Board should look at the Fair Housing Act that deals with accessibility and modifications and see if Miami-Dade is actually up to par. Maybe we can try to get them to reach above par. We need to do research and see where we can help.
- Eddie Sierra: Putting together a housing report to be able to work with housing to solve some of these issues that we had as a whole county?
- Chairman Gregory: The housing study that is somewhere in the pipeline. That is a different thing to what we are discussing here. It's actually a study that the BCC authorized. The Mayor assigned it to BCC to carry out the study and then write a report.
- Chairman Gregory: The idea of the study is to give us a universe because we have no idea what the housing picture looked like for people with disabilities. It's something the BCC and the Mayor's office are putting together. It should be ready next month or the month after.
- Chairman Gregory: There are 270,000 PWD who live in this county and 1600 accessible housing units. That's a large number of folks that are somewhere in no man's land.
- Marilyn Orozco: How much of that funding are you using? There's a lot of talk about widening the housing picture and making it broader for everybody and making Miami-Dade more livable. So where do people with disabilities fit into the picture?
- Speaking of the standard -- the number is 5% that is required. We have a number of developments that are coming online. I can get you what the timeline is for that.
- Chairman Gregory: Thank you. Could we ask that you introduce your team before you leave?
- My name is Michelle. I started two months ago. I am going to the meetings and doing things.

- Chairman Gregory: Thank you. You are brave. Mr. Sierra, would you like to speak to us? You are listed on the agenda under Text-to-911.
- Eddie Sierra: We want an update for the Text-to-911 item on the agenda today. Back in April 15, 2020. My mother made a 911 phone call and waited an hour and a half. So we put in a complaint so they can follow up with the appropriate person.
- The 911 upgrade is nearly complete in Miami-Dade County. We have one 911 center remaining to upgrade which is in the City of Hialeah. I've started the registration with the Federal Communications Commission to inform cell phone carriers that Miami-Dade County 911 centers are ready to test the Text-to-911 system. This process involves certification that each 911 center can receive Text-to-911 messages with the location information and ability to reply to the messages. I will contact each to schedule test calls prior to receiving communication to the Federal Communications Commission that we are ready to test. They will be integrating it this summer. And then two or three months for the FCC to approve.
- Chairman Gregory: I think your outfit will create some general awareness in the general public because I don't think people understand this issue. We are the only county in the state of Florida you cannot text to 911.
- Eddie Sierra: It is a general concern for the school board and entire county.
- How can we all help to get this moving? This can help in so many different facets that go on daily from school shootings and etc.
- Eddie Sierra: Funding is always an issue. Going back to Text-to-911, you know, the issue was the county -- the other counties and the Florida Legislature, in 2017, gave all of the counties about two or three years to come up with a Text-to-911 plan and implement it. Let's get the item on the agenda and get the implementation process.
- Mary Katherine Magnoli: I'm all for reaching out and I will do that.
- Eddie Sierra: Remember the big 911 center is protected. There's a lot of data, a lot of information about the residents. So, there's a software aspect integration for each 911 center. Once they go through the first hurdle, then they have to test it. After they go through that testing, then they ask permission for the Federal Communications Commission and they have to allow each individual's cell phone carriers to implement the Text-to-911 in each area.
- Everyone will say it is an important idea and saves lives. The Mayor and commission will say sure it should be done. We need to get to the bottom line. Who is the person we need to make at the top of the list that?
- Eddie Sierra: It comes through the general director, the lady that sent the email. She has to work with those individual municipalities and the bureaucracies. But the county as a whole because the county has a 911 center. The county should be leading and paving the way. That's not happening.
- I'm a chaplain also with the police department. I'm close with the top. I'm happy to reach out to them. I don't know about code laws and all of that stuff but to start the conversation and help you to find out what really -- what can we get done.
- Rabbi Harlig: I'm happy to call after I leave here and say what can we do to move it along. Any legal issues? I have a lot of people I can get ahold of on a one-to-one basis, but I'm not sure what I'm allowed and not allowed to do sitting on this board.
- Chairman Gregory: This Board does not take away your innate right as a citizen to reach out. I encourage all of you to reach out to your Commissioners on this issue or any of the others who

have spoken about today. Reach out to somebody in their office, whether it is the Commissioners themselves or an aide or a Chief of Staff and channel it up the chain.

- Rabbi Harlig: Police may tell me it is someone else but at least they can direct us where to go.
- Maria Mercedes Villar: We can have a CODI commission write a unifying letter. They gave a large sum of money to a company in Chicago, and we're now in 2024 and we still don't have Text-to-911. We can send out a unified message from the Board to the county Commissioners and have everyone that we know write to their Commissioners about this.
- Chairman Gregory: I wrote a letter about this issue two years ago, when it first came out. We are beyond the letter writing stage now. We may choose to go a more direct approach.
- What you want is shared language, everybody saying the same thing, and you could write a follow-up letter saying a letter was sent on this day. A letter and reaching out because we can say, hey, I want to call you about this letter. Once we receive the letter, we will all agree to reach out to our Commissioners by then.
- Rabbi Harlig: We need the next steps and let them know they said and promised it was supposed to happen and this is where it is holding, and we need you guys to make it happen.
- Chairman Gregory: I will work with staff to draft some language that on the March 26th meeting we will have that language for circulation and comment so that we could, in March, reach out to the Commissioners after we have sent them the letter.
- Rabbi Harlig: I'm going to make some calls to some of the departments to find out what they are saying from police and Mayor's Office.
- Chairman Gregory: In the meantime, Mr. Sierra, I think writing an OP-ED relating your personal experience is also a good thing. Because the more heat we have on this issue the more likely we are to get a response. Sometimes using the media like that is helpful.
- Rabbi Harlig: Am I allowed to call on the Board to set up a meeting with police or say I'd like to talk to you. When I do that people will give you more info. Are there any issues with that?
- Chairman Gregory: You cannot be on the call together. If it is something that we're going to vote on as a CODI Board because Sunshine Law prohibits us from discussing the details of something we are going to vote on because it seems like we are colluding to influence.
- Rabbi Harlig: If I make a phone call to somebody in the department and say I can't believe I was at a meeting and this is what is going on and I don't know the answer I'd rather you talk to a fellow Board member and you can set up a call to see if I can move it along. Any issue with me doing that?
- Chairman Gregory: As long as the two of you don't speak at the same time to the same person on an issue you are going to vote on, correct, Heidi? You can't have two or more members of CODI talking about anything outside.
- Rabbi Harlig: If I'm going to arrange a meeting with people who have influence in this decision I can't sit in a meeting with them to set it up at the same time?
- Heidi: We have had an open position since September. We did interviews hoping to get somebody in April. I was asking a subject matter expert -- like a non-profit, NDIA. They have money they want to give out to people who are innovating technology that will help people with disabilities when they are in an airport, trying to access airport services. The companies want three pots of \$100,000 to go to three different companies. So, I want to let people know to be a part of that and products they are offering and we have to do some interviewing with the companies that will be short listed. We are doing an ADA celebration in July 24-26. We are

doing universal design. The Disability Resource Fair will be at Westchester Library on Saturday, Sept. 21 this year. It is going to be resources for everybody, but we want to focus on what's available for kids. So parents get information on what is out there, what services they may be able to use.

- Last year we had over 50 different organizations at the table. We expect to do that and more this year.
- Natalia Wong: I can't think of anything for us to pull or reference. There's nothing federal that I can find. I can find House and Senate side. I can't find federal law, official language anywhere.
- Chairman Gregory: We will continue to do some research on it and we will send it out to the BCC by next meeting. We want it on the record and to document it. We have our next meeting March 26th, same time, 10:30am-1:00pm; it'll be about emergency management.
- Chairman Gregory: We have to look at room availability and legislating the meeting, but we will keep you posted as to what numbers work.
- 14-C was supposed to be phased out by October 19, 2022.
- Chairman Gregory: Could you email that to staff? And we will do a line that says it is subject to.
- I'm going to look for others because it says the Federal Register Has Prohibition of Payment and Subminimum Wage under 14-C.
- Chairman Gregory: I need a motion to adjourn until the 26th of March or sometime in March depending on the needs of members. It is officially 1:04pm. Meeting is adjourned.